

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASLY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5901

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR TS US XF

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S

MIDDLE EAST VISIT

1. SUMMARY. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL COMMENT, TUNISIANS HAVE GENERALLY REACTED TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT BY EXPRESSING PLEASURE AT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN US AND ARAB STATES BUT AT SAME TIME STRESSING THAT THERE CAN BE NO PEACE UNTIL THE US AND WORLD RECOGNIZE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND FIND SOLUTION TO PALESTINIAN AND JERUSALEM PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. TUNISIANS APPEAR TO BE VERY PLEASED AT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN US AND ARAB STATES AS EXEMPLIFIED BY
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PRESIDENT NIXON'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT. LOCAL PRESS HAS

PLAYED STORY OF TRIP STRAIGHT, ALBEIT WITH EMPHASIS ON PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, BASICALLY DRAWING ON WIRE SERVICE STORIES, JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND TOASTS. TUNISIANS' HOPE ON EVE OF TRIP WAS THAT US WOULD RECOGNIZE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND THUS GAIN CONFIDENCE OF ALL BELLIGERENTS. THIS ATTITUDE EXEMPLIFIED BY PARTY PAPER L'ACTION WHICH ON JUNE 12 PREDICTED THAT US WOULD RECOGNIZE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, NOT JUST REFUGEE PROBLEM, AND THAT THIS WOULD BE IN SPIRIT OF 1947 UN RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE AND LEAD TO ATTEMPT BY FOUR POWERS TO AMEND RESOLUTION 242 TO INCLUDE PALESTINE.

3. PALESTINIAN ISSUE STRESSED THROUGHOUT REST OF TRIP AS SADAT'S, FAYSAL'S AND THEN ASSAD'S CALLS FOR US RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND NECESSITY OF FINDING A SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTED SPECIAL ATTENTION PAID TO USE IN AMERICAN-EGYPTIAN COMMUNIQUE OF PHRASE "LEGITIMATE INTEREST OF PALESTINIANS" INSTEAD OF "LEGITIMATE RIGHTS", WITH L'ACTION OF JUNE 15 CLAIMING THAT DIFFERENCE IS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF NUANCE. PRESIDENT NIXON'S PROMISE TO MAINTAIN MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO ISRAEL DREW HEADLINES IN ALL PAPERS AS DID US-ISRAELI COMMUNIQUE STATEMENT THAT "EVERY STATE SHOULD ABSTAIN FROM ORGANIZING AND ENCOURAGING IRREGULAR FORCES FOR INCURSIONS INTO TERRITORY OF ANOTHER STATE". GOVERNMENT OWNED LA PRESSE SAID THIS STATEMENT PROVES THAT US WILL NOT WANT "IRREGULAR FORCES" (I.E. PALESTINIANS) AT GENEVA AND WILL THUS LIKELY SUPPORT JORDANIAN POSITION THAT WEST BANK IS PART OF JORDAN. SUMMARY OF TUNISIAN FEELING EXPRESSED BY L'ACTION STATEMENT THAT AMERICAN POSITION HAS EVOLVED SLIGHTLY VIS-A-VIS PALESTINE BUT THAT MORE MOVEMENT IS NECESSARY.

4. OTHER MAIN (AND NEW) THEME THAT HAS BEEN NOTICEABLE DURING PRESIDENT NIXON'S TRIP IS VIEW THAT NIXON HAS DONE GREAT THINGS IN MIDDLE EAST AND IS IN PROCESS OF DOING MORE, BUT THAT ZIONIST US PRESS CONTINUES TO BE OBSESSED BY WATERGATE AND IS OUT TO GET HIM. EDITORIALS IN ALL PAPERS EXPRESSED THIS THEME. PERHAPS MOST INTEREST-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ING IS SIGNED ARTICLE IN WEEKLY AS-SADA BY ABDELJALIL DAMMAK WHO IN PAST HAS BEEN POINTED IN CRITICISM OF US. DAMMAK SAID WATERGATE IS LAST OF SERIES OF ZIONIST ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY NIXON BUT NIXON IS INTELLIGENT AND DILLIGNE MAN WHO HAS SAVED WORLD FROM SEVERAL DESTRUCTIVE WARS. "THUS MIDDLE EAST TRIP CFKS WELL STUDIED NIXONIAN ATTEMPT TO SAVE VITAL AMERICAN INTERESTS SO THAT ZIONIST ISRAEL WILL NOT DESTROY THESE INTERESTS."

5. COMMENT: TUNISIANS ARE GENERALLY PLEASED WITH THIS
NEW TURN IN US-ARAB RELATIONS (WHICH IS ALSO SEEN AS A
CONFIRMATION OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S LONG-HELD BELIEFS)
BUT CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT US POSITION
REGARDING THE PALESTINIANS.
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